

Report back to Committee as required by:

**Public Law 245**

**An Act to Expand Public Opportunities for Wildlife Management Education**

**Date:** February 2, 2016

**To:** Senator Paul Davis, Chair  
Representative Bob Duchesne, Chair  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

**Presented By:** Judy Camuso, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

**Subject:** Report back to Committee as required by P.L.c. 245: *“The commissioner shall report on the recommendations of the stakeholders group, including any suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by February 1, 2016. The joint standing committee may report out a bill regarding the commissioner's report to the Second Regular Session of the 127<sup>th</sup> Legislature.”*

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During the 127<sup>th</sup> Session of the Maine State Legislature, the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife considered L.D. 913, “An Act to Expand Public Opportunities for Wildlife Management Opportunities”.

Section 7 of P.L.c. 245 requires the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) to: “convene a stakeholders group to develop recommendations for a 5-year public outreach campaign for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on the department’s efforts to manage game species, including a plan for how money in the Species Management Education Fund under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 12, section 10206, subsection 11 is to be used. The commissioner shall report on the recommendations of the stakeholders group, including any suggested legislation to the Joint Standing Committee of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by February 1, 2016. The joint standing committee may report out a bill regarding the commissioner's report to the Second Regular Session of the 127<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

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**Results and Discussion**

In the spring of 2015 MDIFW issued an RFP to develop a Strategic Marketing and Communications Plan for the Department. As a result of that process, the Department contracted with Responsive Management of Virginia to conduct an extensive survey of Maine citizens.

Responsive Management is a leader in the public opinion survey research and has conducted human dimensions research for almost every state natural resource and outdoor recreation agency. Additionally, Responsive Management has conducted survey research for many of the nation's top universities. They are an internationally recognized public opinion and market research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Responsive Management has 25 years of experience conducting market research regarding public opinions on and attitudes toward hunting, fishing and other natural resource-based outdoor recreation. Additionally, Responsive Management has been instrumental in agency planning, including strategic directions, marketing and communications planning.

Responsive Management was contracted specifically to develop a plan that will raise overall awareness of Maine's residents of MDIFW's mission, programs and projects and measurably increase support of and participation in these programs. The plan will be developed with qualitative and quantitative research with Maine residents and core agency constituent groups including hunters, anglers, wildlife viewers, trappers and boaters. The overall plan will include marketing, communications, and public relations components. Based on a comprehensive situation analysis, the research review and the results of the data collected, Responsive Management will determine the most effective and successful marketing and outreach strategies, including targeted message, methods of distribution and media outlets.

In the fall of 2015 Responsive Management surveyed 900 Maine residents and 900 core agency constituents and conducted two focus groups; one of Maine residents and one of core agency constituents.

Responsive Management provided draft survey results to the Department in December, and we anticipate a final report in February 2016. This will include the qualitative data from the focus groups as well as the quantitative data from the survey. Also by February 2016 we should have the final marketing and communications strategic plan. This plan is essential to maximizing agency resources and success. It will provide a foundation on which to base decisions and allocate resources, develop a focus to guide outreach goals and objectives, and provide a means to monitor and evaluate communication efforts.

In addition, Responsive Management was hired to conduct additional surveys to inform our Big Game Species Planning process. This survey is currently being implemented and we anticipate the results of this survey will give us essential information on messaging to the public on deer, moose, black bear and turkey.

In an effort to leverage more funds to match this funding source, MDIFW applied for and was awarded a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a Communications and Strategic Public Relations plan, with specific and measurable objectives to raise overall public awareness of MDIFW's wildlife program and the benefits and accomplishments of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) funded programs. A copy of this grant is attached. This grant

can provide up to a 3:1 match for every dollar in the Species Management Education Fund. The federal money can only be used in certain circumstances (to educate or promote the projects that the federal funds support) but in general this grant should provide substantial funds to leverage the funds generated by this bill.

MDIFW staff met the stakeholder group twice in January of 2016 regarding P.L.c. 245. The stakeholder group included: Bonnie Holding, MDIFW I & E Director, Mark Latti, MDIFW Communications Specialist, Judy Camuso MDIFW Wildlife Director, Don Kleiner, of Maine Professional Guides, Dave Trahan of The Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Representative Duchesne and Representative Corey.